DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 479 397 SO 035 251

AUTHOR Beaty, Lara Margaret

TITLE Power, Resistance, and Invisibility in High School Video Production: An Exploration of Participation Styles across Genders, Ethnicities, and Schools.

PUB DATE 2003-03-00

NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Feminist Psychology Conference of the Association for Women in Psychology (28th, Jersey City, NJ, March 6-9, 2003).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Ethnicity; Ethnography; Feminist Criticism; Gender Issues; *High Schools; *Resistance (Psychology); Social Science Research; *Student Participation; *Student School Relationship

IDENTIFIERS *Power; Video Production

ABSTRACT

Power frames student-school relations and could be viewed as problematic for student participation. Seeking research methods that reveal the development of student-school relations furthers the understanding of everyday expressions of power and leads to reforms that would improve social relations within and beyond school walls. A project focused on the participation of students in high school video production classes to explore the shifting nature of power as the camera becomes a tool for achieving new forms of participation. The degree to which power and the styles of using, submitting, or avoiding power are revealed in an analysis of how cameras are used. Three schools with video production programs from southern California participated. Ethnographic methods, including weekly observation throughout the targeted courses and interviews with students were used to gather information. Three courses from each of the three schools were observed. Volunteers (n=26) provided video from 15 projects; 18 of the volunteers participated in short interviews, and nine of them narrated some or all of their videos. Work on the rich data generated is in its beginning stages. Overt participation in school video production demonstrates differences among schools and among groups of students based on ethnicity and gender; but to fully understand these differences a microscopic analysis is needed to distinguish how actual events come together to create the distinguishable patterns. A microanalysis begins the journey to discover the intricacies of school contexts that create differences in students. (BT)

Association for Women in Psychology
Celebrating Strength: Feminist Approaches to Trauma, Coping, Resistance, & Resilience
28th Annual Feminist Psychology Conference
March 6-9, 2003

Power, Resistance, and Invisibility in High School Video Production

An Exploration of Participation Styles Across Genders, Ethnicities, and Schools

Lara Margaret Beaty
PhD. Candidate in Developmental Psychology
Graduate School and University Center
City University of New York
lbeaty@gc.cuny.edu

Feminism, at its heart, is about power and the ways people use, resist, and submit to it, thus a feminist study of development should explore the role of power. Butler (1997) emphasizes the the role of power by arguing that subjection is necessary for the genesis of consciousness, while Diamondstone (2002) seems to suggest that some form of resistance is necessary for development to occur. All children begin life in a position that is subservient to and dependent on their caregivers, but they grow to have very different relations with power. School has become the major institution with which modern children relate to the world outside of the family, and the *relationship* between students and schools—as represented by teachers, staff, the student body, and the material environment—is inherently asymmetrical.

Power frames student-school relations and could be viewed as problematic for student participation. Authority is routinely and sometimes invisibly expressed in daily activities through the establishment of agendas, the control of resources, and the limits placed on movement. Thus seeking research methods that will reveal the development of student-school relations will

further our understanding of everyday expressions of power and could lead to reforms that would improve social relations within and beyond school walls. This project focuses on the participation of students in high-school video-production classes to explore the shifting nature of power as the camera becomes a tool for achieving new forms of participation. The degree to which power and the styles of using, submitting, or avoiding power are revealed in an analysis of how cameras are used.

Video production reveals social relations in three ways: First the activity around production enables multiple forms of participation as well as levels of participation that are easily associated with different performances of gender and ethnicity. Students can direct, record, edit, act, write, or find other behind-the-scenes, support roles with or without the use of technology. The choices students make in these roles reveal patterns. Worth and Adair (1972) and Chalfen (1992) noted ethnic and class differences in whether film students preferred being in front of or behind the camera and in where groups chose to locate their videos and films, but they did not explore gender differences. Nevertheless gender differences and differences in how ethnicity and school culture are associated with different patterns of participation are evident in this study.

Secondly, video production changes the traditional position of students: Students cannot remain at their desks and participate only through traditional question-and-answer periods and written assignments. If they choose to make a video, they must move away from their desks to recording locations and computers for editing. Sometimes, the camera becomes a "hallpass" to distant places of the school or even to leave school grounds. The camera can become a way of meeting new people or shaping relations with the people who are known. Some students have the potential of becoming "famous" as the entire school watches them on school news programs, and

students who remain behind the scenes can find a role that is neither academic nor "slacker" as they become part of a valued community within the larger school community. All students who participate in video production have the opportunity to change their usual position at both the physical and social levels.

Finally and most important to the purposes of this study, video activity is recorded, permitting a microanalysis of "naturally" occurring activity for comparison with the more macro-forms of participation. Specifically, the uses of the camera to mediate activities is interpreted from a sociocultural and social semiotic perspective. The goal is to explore a new method of exposing social relations and the changes therein that could detail the microgenesis of power relations and their role in development while observing how students choose to change the existing relationship. But before the microanalytic methods are explored, the overt participation of students and how they differ between schools will be explored.

The Schools, Programs, and Students

Three schools with video production programs from Southern California participated. They are referred to as Urban High, Suburban High, and Boarding High, but these differences were only the most superficial of the many differences between the schools and video-production programs. Ethnographic methods, including weekly observation throughout the targeted courses and interviews with students—including a few narrations of video work—were used to gather this information. Only videotapes of students who volunteered were duplicated for further analysis, but notes on the work of all students in the observed classes were made. Three courses from each of the three schools were observed. A total of twenty-six volunteers provided video from fifteen projects, and eighteen of the volunteers participated in short interviews and nine of

them narrated some or all of their videos.

Suburban High is the best place to start because it comes closest to representing a cross-section of America (and more so for California) in its ethnic composition and because it has the most developed video program. In a distant suburb of Los Angeles, its student population is approximately 45% European American, 40% Latino, 10% African American, and 5% Asian American. The school has about 2000 students. Indications from available statistics and the appearance of the community are that students are from a mix of lower and middle class families. The program is vocational with four beginning and one advanced class. The advanced class began broadcasting a school news program to classrooms via an intranet during the observation period.

Urban High, by contrast, is in Central Los Angeles and reflects its urban location. The student population is approximately 80% Latino and 20% African American with an overall population of nearly 4000 students. Poverty is apparent in the school building and its community, and the school is open year-round in an effort by the city to expand the available space for classes. The "New Media Academy," as it is called, was created as part of a reform project initiated by a non-profit group, financed in part by the movie industry, and involving multiple schools with very mixed results. The program demonstrated multiple ideologies, and teachers changed their approaches during the observation period due to conflict with school security and the frustrations of the teachers. One of the three teachers who taught media classes decided to quit teaching media, and one of the remaining teachers chose to teach media literacy and leave the use of the camera to the one remaining teacher. The school plans to further transform its program in 2003 into a vocational one with a new teacher, who has specialized training.

Boarding High is not a typical boarding school, and the video production program is not

like any other discovered thus far. The school is a federal school for Native Americans. The students come from reservations, cities, and rural areas throughout the western United States. The enrollment for one year was officially at about 500, but students were routinely sent home when problems occurred and particularly so during the first year of observation. The school itself was a beautiful, new building with murals throughout that became frequent material for video work, but the dorms appeared to be older and simpler, and one group of students expressed dissatisfaction with dorm life in their video work. The video program was a short five-class arrangement, conducted by an outside group promoting digital arts, funded through a not-for-profit group, and led by college interns. The sessions were conducted in art classes with the purpose of promoting the technology of digital media.

Student Participation

Student participation was noticeably different between schools. In Suburban High, the advanced class, in particular, showed gender differences in how students participated. Female students were most likely to be in front of the camera or in writing positions, while *all* of the technical work of camera operation, sound mixing, lighting, graphics editing, and establishing and maintaining the intranet was done by male students. The beginning classes showed less clear gender patterns, except for the fact that boys far outnumbered girls in all classes. In one of the two participating classes, girls were typically at the center of activities and worked on some of the strongest projects, but in the other class that was observed, only one girl attended class regularly and was never at the center of activity. The ethnicities of the girls and the ethnic distributions of the classes appeared to contribute to participation patterns.

Gendered participation in Urban High was less apparent: In the more advanced classes, male students outnumbered female students, but the difference was not as dramatic as at Suburban High. There was no noticeable difference in the Media 1 class. Overall participation, however, was considerably lower at Urban High: In one class, one group of girls never worked on a video, but the other two girls in the class participated quite often and usually participated from behind the camera. Girls in the Media 1 class were particularly vocal about not wanting to be on camera and about not wanting anyone to see a video in which they appeared, but the only piece to be edited was completed by a group of girls and one openly homosexual boy. Boys did not express discomfort about being in front of the camera, and groups of girls frequently asked boys in the class to operate the cameras for them. The level of absenteeism was so high, that tracking students became difficult, but no patterns based on gender or ethnicity were detectable.

A pattern of gendered participation at Boarding High was also not evident. Some students in all three of the observed sessions stopped participating, but the one time that all the dropouts were girls seemed to be due to the context: An unavailable computer prevented them from working one day and they chose not to work the one remaining day of the session. The teacher's intervention of selecting only some students from her large class in the last observed session led to each group finishing their projects despite the disappearance of one or two students from each group. Overall, the quality of participation was not consistently different between boys and girls.

Worth and Adair (1972) noted ethnic and class differences in whether people preferred to be in front of or behind the camera, which was attributed by Chalfen (1992) to social class differences in how to pursue power. Accordingly, middle-class individuals would prefer the symbolic manipulation of being behind the camera while lower-class populations would prefer the more direct activity of performing in front of the camera. If these differences had any effect

on participation at Suburban High, it was clouded by the emphasis of the program on mastering the technology. The only clear ethnic differences noted were in level of participation and in the status of positions in the advanced class. On the other hand, gender differences were consistent with Chalfen's analysis that more powerful groups would prefer symbolic manipulation.

The more dramatic observations that are relevant to ethnic differences were about participation in the Media 1 class at Urban High: Here, the camera was rarely used to symbolically or otherwise affect activities, seeming to support the conclusions about ethnic and class differences. On the other hand, neither of the two ethnic groups consistently demonstrated an active joy about being in front of the camera. The few potentially symbolic manipulations by the camera that existed did not seem to serve a meaningful purpose but were inserted to add variation rather than meaning. Camera techniques simply were not emphasized. In another class at Urban High, the emphasis was placed on editing, so that editing rather than camera work was the major tool used to shape events and thus symbolic manipulate events. The differences between these two schools, therefore, seemed to be influenced more by the prevalent ideologies than ethnicity. The significant observation is in the interaction between ethnicity and gender, because gender seemed to have less of an impact when less powerful (and dominant) ethnic groups were the majority.

The emphasis placed on the planning stages in both Urban High and Suburban High created a problem for this analysis: The camera was rarely used to assert an influence on immediate events, but one group of students at each school chose to record non-scripted events. These two projects are thus the focus of the micro-analysis. In Suburban High, the focal project produced a documentary about the news program. At Urban High, the assignment of a How-To Video was used to wander the school in search of interviews about safe sex. By contrast, all of

the projects at Boarding High contained the type of camera work needed for the micro-analysis, due mostly to the flexibility given the students and the de-emphasis on planning. The difficulty in getting parental permissions led to the selection of two focal projects.

The Micro-Analysis

The micro-analysis of selected videos aims to investigate whether tracing student uses of the camera can reveal the microgenesis of power relations within the video projects but is thus far focused on displaying the diversity in relationships and the diversity in individual activity. The unit of analysis is each event as defined by an act of the camera operator that in some way reflects a separate activity. When sufficient events are coded and the coding scheme solidified, evidence for patterned change over time will be pursued and compared to the patterns detected between schools, genders, and ethnicities. The uses of the camera that are considered include zooms, pans, tilts, dollies, rotations, special effects, lighting arrangements, and uses of the "voice." Each of these acts are considered to be techniques built into the camera that can express different relationship qualities. Editing offers additional techniques and also reflect the student-school relationship but are not currently under consideration.

When students used the camera without being tightly scripted, the styles with which they use it reveal differences in how they relate to people and objects in real time. Scripted projects also reveal differences, but the differences are not in response to the immediate context or activity and thus must be considered as a separate type of activity. A great deal of student camera work departs from the scripts that exist, but rather than tease apart what is and is not according to the script, the focus is currently on the projects that clearly did not use a script with that level of

detail: What brief scripts may have existed did not direct except in the most general terms which activities to record or with what techniques.

The approach was conceived when students in an after-school video club in a New York City high school used the video camera to go places they typically weren't allowed, to invisibly distort and comment upon activities, to engage in aggressive teasing, and to actively challenge the authority of teachers—all with the techniques listed above. The analysis originates in the work of Michel de Certeau (1984), who made the distinction in his study of "everyday practices" between *strategies* and *tactics*: Accordingly strategies are actions taken from a position of power and tactics are actions taken from a position of weakness. These categories are discussed in terms of specific relations to space and time, which are illustrated in the beautiful example of the strategy involved in standing atop the World Trade Center:

> To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city's grasp. One's body is no longer clasped by the streets that turn and return it according to an anonymous law; nor is it possessed, whether as player or played, by the rumble of so many differences and the nervousness of New York traffic. When one goes up there, he [or she] leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators. . . . It transforms the bewitching world by which one was "possessed" into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. (p. 92)

The connection of power to a place is in the ability of a powerful act to establish what is and is not appropriate in a given place. The strategic use of a place involves a choice and overview not available to everyone. One manifestation of this power is simply in the act of seeing all of an area, including the organization and structure. Tactics, on the other hand, find power through the

use of time, by taking advantage of a moment to accomplish what is not inscribed in the place; it is in finding for a moment the space within a place to pursue unofficial or illicit activities.

Student use of a video camera is by definition a tactic because students are not in a position of power while in school. They instead must steal time to pursue purposes that are not inscribed in the walls of the school. Within these tactics, however, students find power in the innovation of a camera to act in a more strategic or tactical manner. These differences are pursued in the analysis. But power does not by itself define the quality of relationships. Hodge and Kress (1988) insist that messages—such as those expressed intentionally or unintentionally in the uses of the camera—"concern two dimensions: power and solidarity" (p. 39). Power is dependent on a certain level of solidarity while at the same time it threatens it, and thus the expressions of more or less solidarity are a necessary part of understanding the quality of relationships in schools. Expressions of solidarity can use conceptions of identity or can simply arise in a show of benevolence rather than disregard. Because places and the power asserted by places in defining activities are so significant, the camera operator's relations with Places and People are considered separately but viewed as two sides of the overall relationship with school.

The Relationship with Places

The material environment is understood as a social semiotic device, which in becoming a "place" and being "owned" to varying degrees by the people who use it is a participant in student-school relations. The question for this analysis is one of whether the structure of a place is strategically used to shape activity or becomes something to be evaded. In student videos, a variety of strategies and tactics arise. The strategy of using the structure of a place is displayed most simply in the symbolic power of displaying all that there is to see. A camera can pan across

a room, showing the relationship of one part to another. The organization of a space can be displayed and "owned" through the camera in this way. Power is additionally seized in labeling what is visible, and this is a power that extends to interactions with people but that is defined by the person's placement behind the camera. In such cases, the words of people held in the lens of the camera carry considerably less weight than the disembodied voice of the camera operator. It is the authority of the camera that gives the voice of its operator more power.

Beyond the actual placement of being behind rather than in front of the camera, the place is strategically used at times by standing and moving while everyone else sits. The camera in effect gives a student the freedom to move and not be confined to the desk, but once the departure is made, the structure of the classroom can be used to her or his advantage. Normally, the student is owned by the desk, but in picking up the camera, the student can own the place. In classrooms, the power of the camera to alter events becomes stronger when the student occupies the place usually owned by the teacher; the student thus has the freedom to approach a desk and extend the microphone to one and only one student. This demonstrates how the strategic use of places lies partly in what meanings are already contained there. Thus occupying the teacher's position combines the power of the camera with the symbolic power of height—standing while everyone else sits—and the associations between the place and the authority of the teacher. In one segment of video, a teacher participated in such an interview of her class: A pair of students used the camera and microphone to legitimize their movement around the room and to ask individual students what they believed about "safe sex," but the teacher conceded only a part of her power by remaining at the front of her class and facing the students even though she sat. When she spoke, she took some of the power of the microphone by placing her hand on the interviewer's arm as it was extended toward her. This last act of gently contesting the ownership

of the microphone was repeated again and again in interviews of students and teachers, so that the power of the interviewer was silently and tactically borrowed and the interviewer—in an expression of solidarity—cooperated with the minor act of resistance.

The tactic of evading the structure of a place is perhaps the normal activity of students while in school and can sometimes be displayed quite like de Certeau described in the person walking through the streets of Manhattan. The camera can be seen navigating through structural obstacles rather than displaying and thus possessing them. The perspective of the "consumer" is seen when the camera is used to show the normal subjective experience of walking through the school. It is used when the camera becomes a way to evade the institutional purposes of education and instead look for friends and non-academic activities. This sometimes takes on the quality of exploration with a camera because exploration is not a tactic of the powerful when it lacks an overview and a plan. A tactical relationship to the material environment is also seen the in the efforts to momentarily distort the structure—to alter how we perceive it through special effects and distortions or even to turn it upside down by rotating the camera. Structural obstacles can additionally be overcome with a camera, allowing a way into restricted places, for instance through locked doors when a small window is available; the camera with its zoom functions can bring one through a window and into the room beyond. Another tactic is the temporary transformation of a place in the use of a set or blank wall, if only for a minute, to serve one's immediate needs. The lack of power in these temporary transformations is, however, not difficult to remember as such efforts are frequently interrupted by passing students or PA announcements.

The Relationship with People

The relationship with people is more obviously a part of the student-school relationship, and it becomes more complex. The first question is, Are other people's activities strategically constrained by the uses of the camera? This is a meaningless question in regard to the material environment because objects and places are not active: A place cannot be constrained when the camera pans across it, displaying what is has to offer. But with people and the activities they participate in, the camera can be used to exert a control that is not possible without the camera. The strategy of constraining people's activity is displayed most dramatically in the overt control over who is seen and who is not. By simply being pointed toward or away from a subject, the camera effectively asserts what is and is not valued. This power is emphasized by the directions called out by the camera operator and in the use of a script asserted on activity that is to be recorded.

The constraint of activity was relatively rare across the three schools in this study and may be do to camera activity being subject to a grade. Unlike the pilot data from New York, which was the ungraded activity of a club, strategies were much more frequently displayed symbolically—through the use of the place rather than in the active restraint of other people's participation. The constraint that did exist tended to be that of recording people who did not want to be recorded. In the one video club that existed at participating schools, the only product available for analysis was a "video year book" that exerted a great deal of control by using only still photographs set to music, but this is not an adequate comparison.

The choice of not constraining people's participation is frequently displayed in the often invisible control a camera operator asserts—with or without words. For instance, ongoing conversations receive attention—are zoomed in upon—but without the people being affected or even aware sometimes of being recording. This type of "eavesdropping" or voyeurism perhaps

deserves some special attention, but it clearly is not something that asserts itself immediately on the activity. One camera operator in particular asserted NO control but simply recorded everything he could while waiting for the moment that sounded right to happen and then attempting to edit masses amount of video down to a few minutes. In such cases, symbolic strategies can be asserted in the editing process but entirely without limiting the actual activities.

The second question that arises when recording people, which does not in the analysis of the material environment, is the only to separately address the question of solidarity: *Is solidarity increased or decreased during the recording activity?* This consideration of the relationships with people is so different from that with the material environment because the use of the material world's existing structure is necessarily strategic AND high in solidarity if one type of high solidarity is understood as cooperation with the "other's" intent. Affinity can be expressed through cooperation, and with people, the limitations on activity—these immediate assertions of power—can be separated from whether high or low solidarity is expressed. In "teasing" sequences, limitations on activity are asserted when the responses—the acts of teasing back—are visibly "cut out" by turning the camera away or off. Limitations on the other's participation are not asserted when the full game is recorded. Thus the correlation between constraint and solidarity may be high, but they are potentially in conflict, and those moments may be the most interesting ones to pursue.

In general, high solidarity is displayed in the expression of affinity or similarity. This can be expressed non-verbally in the simple act of touching someone in a friendly manner or asserting intimacy by standing close to someone while recording. Verbally, high solidarity is expressed with anything that sounds like a compliment, such as in saying with a certain tone of awe that someone is a "senior," or that draws on similarities, such as in being "juniors" or

"students" and thus similar. Low solidarity, on the other hand, is displayed by expressing difference, opposition, or distance. This happens quite often (if ambiguously) in the frequent teasing between students. It also occurs in asserting differences of gender, ethnicity, age, or grades and in remaining physically distant from the subject. There are a few cases in which an act that is typically understood as high in solidarity become acts of low solidarity depending on what is surrounding the act: A zoom in can be understood as intimacy (high solidarity) if the subject and camera person are already standing near and sharing a sincere moment, but if the subject is being verbally mocked or is actively asserting authority, the "intimate" act of zooming in becomes an assertion of power, not unlike rape. Two issues must be kept in the fore: Zooming in is not that same as walking near because the zoom is not detectable to the participant, and the context of the event and surrounding acts must be maintained, so that no technique or act is considered in isolation.

Toward a conclusion

The work on this rich data set is only in its beginning stages. Overt participation in school video production demonstrates differences between schools and between groups of students based on ethnicity and gender, but to fully understand these differences a microscopic analysis is needed to distinguish how actual events—not just group tendencies or cultures—come together to create the distinguishable patterns. A microanalysis will begin the journey to discovering what about the contexts of schools creates differences in students. This description of the microanalysis is intended more as an elaboration of the method than as an indication of the range, because only a small set of videos have thus far been coded and the examples are only a few of what could be described. The key is in how sometimes these acts—the choice of

techniques associated with the use of a video camera—display a power or act of resistance that would otherwise have been invisible, and the immediate contexts and responses to these acts can begin to be documented.

The first step, then, is to further explore the diversity in the ways of using power and solidarity both within and between students—to recognize the richness of moments that are rarely remembered at the conscious level. The only strong conclusion that can be asserted at this point is that the variety of uses that have been observed demonstrate that nearly all individuals relate to power in multiple ways during video production, some seeking to change their positions in dramatic ways and others seeking only to explore worlds that they have no interest in influencing. Personal differences exist, but particularly in the cooperative work of students, the ways they have of trying out different techniques is revealed. This diversity within individuals is frequently overlooked. More importantly the role of context and the similarities in camera use between students when in similar contexts can be clearly documented. The camera certainly is central to the overt participation of students, but because the camera is a new tool for most of these students and is new in the school context for all students, the moment-to-moment changes in camera usage can be expected to reflect the process of developing particular patterns, which in turn is expected to reflect the process of change in the student-school relationship. The role of the school—beyond the impact of individual teachers and students—in the process of forming a relationship can be explored in detail, and the use of the material environment as well as activity allows a deeper analysis of the ideologies existing in these contexts.

The next step in this continuing analysis, then, is to trace the changes in how power and solidarity are expressed and to define how these minute acts participate in the microgenesis of student-school relationships. This includes noting what parts of school are involved and what the

dialogue between school and students is like. The limitations of this study are exerted in how few of the students' videos are usable with this analysis, but the structure of classes seems to determine how planned the video projects tend be and thus future projects could be more selective in selecting participating programs. An enormous amount of evidence exists in the micro-analysis that cameras are used as social tools to influence the camera operator's relationship with school, even if the students are not aware of it. It is clear that the context at both the micro- and macro-levels is a major part of the development of power relations. The mounting evidence for the participation of the material environment in this development suggests some often neglected ways toward school reform: that of making modifications to the actual buildings in support of the philosophies of teachers and students.

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